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March 13, 2024

Representative Robert E. Craven
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
House Lounge
Providence, RI 02908

H 7373 Position: Opposed

Re: H 7373 Mandatory Locking of Firearms

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The National Shooting Sports Foundation ("NSSF") is the trade association for America's firearms, ammunition, hunting and recreational shooting sports industry. The mission of NSSF is to promote, protect and preserve hunting and the shooting sports. NSSF has a membership of nearly 9,000 manufacturers, distributors, firearms retailers, shooting ranges, and sportsmen's organizations.

Our manufacturer members make the firearms used by law-abiding Rhode Island sportsmen, the U.S. military and law enforcement agencies throughout the state. This is to notify you of NSSF's opposition to further expansion and criminalization of mandatory locking of firearms.

Before we address our substantive concerns with the bills, NSSF would like to take a moment to call your attention to the positive downward trend in accidental deaths involving firearms. They have been decreasing consistently since recordkeeping began in 1903 and have dramatically declined in the last 20 years. In fact, over the last two decades, the number of unintentional firearm-related fatalities involving children has decreased by 74 percent as a result of firearms safety efforts by industry, such as the industry supported Project ChildSafe, and the educational and safety programs of groups like 4-H and the Boy Scouts of America, among others. Firearms are involved in less than 1% of all accidental deaths in the United States. A person is 56 times more likely to be involved in an unintentional fatality with a motor vehicle than with a firearm.

NSSF does not believe that a state has the right to tell law-abiding gun-owners the proper way to store their firearms. This should be an individual's choice based upon his or her living arrangements. Given the District of Columbia v. Heller decision, which struck down storage requirements as being unconstitutional, many storage regulations have been challenged.

One needs to only look at the text of the bill to realize the true intent of language "in order to render such firearm inoperable by any person other than the owner." Safe storage should be an individual decision and in the current environment with crimes rates though the roof making a firearm inoperable is not appropriate in self defense situations. Over the past two years there have been 15 million new gun-owners who continually point to the fact that they want the ability to protect themselves and their family, mandated locking of firearms prevents that.

The firearms industry and law-abiding gun owners in Rhode Island continue to be among the most heavily regulated populations in the nation. Rhode Island residents are already required to comply with a stringent set of rules and regulations governing the lawful commerce in firearms as well as storage requirements when a minor or prohibited person is present. The proposed mandate would accomplish

nothing except to further penalize law-abiding firearms owners, while doing nothing to decrease violent crime in the state.

Members of the firearms industry have taken a leadership role in promoting the safe and responsible use and storage of firearms. Manufacturers provide product manuals with their products that provide important information about how to safely and properly store firearms so that they cannot be accessed by unauthorized persons. Manufacturers for decades have voluntarily provided free locking devices with each new firearm that is shipped from the factory. Federally licensed retailers are required to make secure firearm storage and safety devices available in their stores for purchase and also provide a firearm storage device with every handgun they sell.

If your intent is to curb firearms accidents, in lieu of adopting ineffective and burdensome ordinances, we suggest another route with broad national support. The firearms industry has long worked to help prevent the unauthorized access to firearms by including a free gun lock in every new firearm sale and through a program called Project ChildSafe, which has distributed more than 36 million safety kits with cable locks since its inception in 2003. Project ChildSafe (www.projectchildsafe.org) is the nation's largest and most comprehensive firearms safety program.

Project ChildSafe promotes the safe handling and storage of firearms by providing free firearms safety kits and safety educational materials to gun owners through partnerships with the nation's 15,000 law enforcement agencies. This program, funded in the past by the Department of Justice (DOJ) – Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and firearms and shooting sports industry members through NSSF, is designed to help prevent tragic firearms-related accidents, particularly among children.

Project ChildSafe has formed partnerships with nearly every law enforcement agency in the country, plus elected officials such as governors, lieutenant governors and mayors, U.S. Attorneys, hunter education teachers and concerned civic groups, all of whom help advance the program's message and distribute firearm safety kits to gun owners across America. Our industry is committed to this program and helping to make sure that those who should not have access to firearms are stopped.

NSSF has also advocated for innovative programs that promote safe storage practices without criminalizing law-abiding citizens and businesses, such as sales tax exemptions for firearms security devices, to promote greater safety measures in keeping children and unauthorized persons from accessing firearms. Today, all firearms are shipped from their manufacturers with appropriate locking devices.

We must all work together to help prevent those who exhibit reckless disregard for human life and values access to firearms for criminal purposes. But we must also preserve the constitutional rights of tens of millions of law-abiding Americans to safely and responsibly own, store and use firearms for personal protection, hunting and recreation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jake McGuigan", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Jake McGuigan